

## HIGHLIGHTS

# PULSE OF PEACE IN DONBAS



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### UKRAINE NEEDS \$7BN MONTHLY FINANCIAL AID

[According to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#), partner countries have become more aware of Ukraine's needs and the effectiveness of aid has increased. The UK government has [announced](#) the removal of duties and quotas on goods from Ukraine under the current free trade agreement in response to a request by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to support the country's economy during the war.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [stressed](#) at a ministerial roundtable in support of Ukraine as part of the World Bank and IMF Spring Meetings 2022 that Ukraine needs \$7 billion in support each month. Ukrainian Prime Minister Denis Shmygal noted that Ukraine's GDP could fall by 30-50% this year, and according to preliminary analysis, direct and indirect losses due to the war are already \$560 billion. The Washington Post, citing sources, [reports](#) that Ukraine is asking the administration of US President Joe Biden to provide at least \$2 billion a month in emergency economic aid during the war.

G7 finance ministers have [pledged](#) with the international community to provide more than \$24 billion in additional aid to Ukraine for 2022, stressing that they are "willing to do more if necessary." Germany [pledges](#) 37 million euros to rebuild Ukraine, primarily housing and energy infrastructure damaged during the war.

## DEFENSE MINISTERS FROM 40 COUNTRIES MEET TO COORDINATE AND INCREASE SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

The leaders of the [United States](#), [Canada](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) have pledged to increase the supply of artillery to Ukraine amid the start of a new stage of the Russian-Ukrainian war. [The Netherlands](#), [Romania](#), [Finland](#) and [Turkey](#) said they were ready to provide military equipment to Ukraine, including machinery and demining equipment. The Czech Republic [announced](#) plans to repair Ukrainian tanks and armored personnel carriers.

The European Union agreed to buy heavy weapons and transfer them free of charge to Ukraine to support the war against Russia. European Council President Charles Michel [noted](#) that over the last two months the EU had allocated 1.5 billion euros to Ukraine through the European Peace Facility instrument. He also added that this support was still not enough, and the EU would do more.

On the Pentagon's initiative, defense ministers from 40 U.S. allies [met](#) at the NATO base in Ramstein, Germany, on April 26 to discuss support for Ukraine. Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov attended the meeting of the so-called Ukrainian Defense Advisory Group. At the beginning of the event, Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin stressed that the purpose of the meeting was to understand Ukraine's medium-term security needs and coordinate a joint response. The U.S. Secretary of Defense stressed that the coming weeks will be crucial for Ukraine, so its partners need to act quickly to help. Lloyd Austin specifically mentioned that the Advisory Group will support Ukraine not only until it wins the war unleashed by Russia, but also after it ends.

Austin said that since the Russian invasion, the U.S. and its allies and partners have pledged more than \$5 billion worth of equipment and supplies to Ukraine. He also welcomed recent decisions by Germany to send 50 Gepard anti-aircraft systems to Ukraine, Canada to send eight armored vehicles, and Britain to send additional anti-aircraft systems.

German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht said after the meeting that her country intended to continue supplying weapons to Ukraine. Earlier German media [published](#) information that the company Rheinmetall applied to the German federal government with a request to export 88 old Leopard tanks to Ukraine.

Norway [announced](#) plans to allocate almost \$44 million to the British-led mechanism for buying arms and military equipment for Ukraine. According to the Norwegian prime minister, in this way the country will provide Ukraine with equipment that the Norwegian Armed Forces do not have or cannot transfer without weakening the defense capabilities of Norway itself.

## EXCHANGE OF VISITS: U.S. AND UKRAINE DISCUSS SECURITY GUARANTEES AND TOUGHER SANCTIONS

On 22 April, Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmygal [met](#) with US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken in Washington DC. During the talks, Denys Shmygal [stressed](#) that Ukraine needed modern weapons and financial assistance, as well as the extension of sanctions against Russia. In particular, the prime minister urged the USA to disconnect all Russian banks from SWIFT and recognize Russia as a country sponsoring terrorism.

Anthony Blinken [stressed](#) that Ukraine's courage in defense of freedom and democracy inspires the United States.

U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Ukraine on April 25. This is the first visit of U.S. officials of this level to Kiev since the Russian invasion began. Blinken and Austin met with President Volodymyr Zelensky, as well as Ukrainian government officials and senior military leaders. Volodymyr Zelensky [discussed](#) with the delegation defense assistance, financial support for Ukraine, and security guarantees. Zelensky stressed that Ukraine sees the United States as a leader among future Ukrainian security guarantor countries. He also handed over to the American side a plan of action for tougher sanctions against Russia. In his turn, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin [announced](#) a new aid package for Ukraine. Of the \$713 million, \$322 million is earmarked for Ukraine, and the rest will be divided among NATO members and countries that have been providing weapons to Kiev since the Russian invasion. The new aid package differs from previous ones - it is not a donation from U.S. Defense Department stockpiles, but cash that countries can use to buy needed military goods. U.S. officials also [announced](#) the return of U.S. diplomats to Ukraine as soon as possible.

Following the meeting, the Pentagon [said](#) it would expand military training for Ukrainian servicemen, in particular, on the use of weapons new to them, which are handed over by the West.

## THE EU CONTINUES TO DISCUSS A POSSIBLE ENERGY EMBARGO, WITH A GRAY MARKET FOR RUSSIAN OIL EXPORTS FORMING AROUND IT

The European Union is still working on the sixth package of sanctions against Russia and does not have a unified position. Discussions continue between member states over an embargo on Russian oil and gas, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell [said](#) in an interview. French President Emmanuel Macron [has said](#) he supports the embargo on Russian energy and, among other things, believes that France does not need Russian gas. Austrian Finance Minister Magnus Brunner [said](#) that Austria agrees to any anti-Russian sanctions except the gas embargo, while German Chancellor Olaf Scholz [believes](#) that Germany cannot give up Russian energy carriers because it would greatly damage the economy and at the same time would not help to stop the war in Ukraine. At the same time, experts conclude that a "gray" export market is [being formed](#) around Russian oil

without specifying the final destination; the goal of this strategy is to circumvent sanctions.

The first sanctions list, which included Gazprom and a number of Russian oligarchs, was adopted by [Poland](#).

The UK [expanded](#) its sanctions list against Russia by 26 items, [adding](#) a number of military figures and defense companies, and banned the sale of electronic equipment to Russia that can be used for communications interception and espionage, a number of other goods, and also increased [duties](#) on trade with Russia. [Australia](#) also increased the list of individuals subject to sanctions.

The U.S. [expanded](#) the list of sanctions against Russia to include more than 40 individuals and entities involved in attempts to evade sanctions, and imposed visa restrictions on 635 people involved in suppressing free speech, activities that threaten Ukraine's territorial integrity, and human rights abuses in prisons. The U.S. has also [banned](#) all ships that have ties to Russia from entering its ports.

In addition to the energy embargo, the sanctions plan that Ukraine will propose against Russia lists measures aimed at making it impossible to avoid the sanctions already imposed and increasing the financial isolation of the country, the first publication of the International Working Group on Sanctions against Russia under the Ukrainian president, called the "Ermak-Makfol" group, [said](#).

Ukraine expects reparations to rebuild its infrastructure after the war to come, among other things, from Russia's frozen assets abroad, [according to Ukrainian Finance Minister Sergei Marchenko](#).

Economic Truth [publishes](#) an analysis of how Russia until recently circumvented the sanctions imposed on it.

[As noted by The Wall Street Journal](#), Russian authorities have begun to shut down information about key economic indicators in order to hide the problems the country faces because of the sanctions. The restrictions are expected to prevent the EU and the U.S. from seeing how their sanctions are affecting the Russian economy, as well as making it difficult to find new targets and fine-tune future rounds of sanctions. At the same time, the Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade has created a [list](#) of foreign products for which the opening of so-called parallel imports, when goods are brought into the country without the permission of trademark owners, is proposed. [According to the Russian media outlet Izvestia](#), it is proposed to sell more than 50 groups of goods and 200 brands without the permission of the right holder.

## "REFERENDUMS" AND FORCED CONSCRIPTION ARE BEING ORGANIZED IN THE OCCUPIED REGIONS OF UKRAINE

On the territory of one of Ukraine's occupied territorial communities, Russian troops held an illegal ["referendum"](#) to temporarily join the so-called "DPR". In the temporarily occupied territory of the Kherson region, preparations for a "referendum" also [continue](#), and it is planned that the "vote" will be formalized with passport data collected from local residents while receiving "humanitarian aid". A possible date for the holding is [called](#) April 27. [According to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of](#)

[Ukraine](#), a "census of the population" in the temporarily occupied territories of the Kherson region is planned to follow in early May. Local residents are prohibited from any movement between settlements, it is noted that in Zaporizhia, Kharkiv and Kherson regions of Ukraine, the occupation forces are conducting a [forced mobilization](#) of the population, including [medics](#), for war and attempts to completely eliminate the possibility of receiving humanitarian support from Ukraine.

## CHANGE OF TARGETS: RUSSIA INTENDS TO FULLY OCCUPY THE DONBAS AND SOUTHERN UKRAINE, ALL THE WAY TO "TRANSNISTRIA"

On 19 April, the head of the Luhansk regional military administration, Serhiy Gaidai, [noted](#) that the number of attacks by the Russian armed forces in Donbas had increased several times in the previous days. At the same time, the secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, Oleksiy Danilov, [believes](#) that a full-scale offensive by the Russian army on the eastern front has not yet begun, and that the attacks were an attempt to test the strength of the Ukrainian armed forces. He notes that the start of the so-called "big offensive" is only a matter of time. Danilov noted that over the next two to four weeks, Russia could pull up its reserves and warned against predicting that this battle for Donbas would be the last and decisive one. On April 22, the Russian military command [announced](#) the start of the second phase of the war, which aims to fully occupy the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as southern Ukraine, all the way to the unrecognized "[Transnistria](#)", which is part of Moldova. [According to British intelligence](#), Russia has acknowledged that the war is not going according to plan, but this will not help it to change the situation quickly. Russian troops have temporarily taken control of a number of settlements in the Kherson region and, according to the Ukrainian Armed Forces General Staff, want to reach the region's administrative borders.

They are also [unsuccessfully trying to advance](#) to the administrative border with the Mykolaiv region. Russia [continues](#) to pull additional battalion-tactical groups into Ukraine, some of which are being sent to Donbas.

[According to the international investigative journalist group Conflict Intelligence Team](#), if the battle for Donbas ends with any outcome, Russia will not be able to continue its offensive operations. From here on, it will either have to negotiate, which Ukraine is not ready to do, or continue the war by declaring mobilization, which will cause an additional blow to an economy that has already suffered from sanctions.

Daily shelling of other regions of Ukraine also continues, with Kharkiv and the region being shelled about [50 times](#) on April 21 alone. The mayor of Kharkiv, Igor Terekhov, promised to help evacuate people living in the shelled areas of the city. According to him, about 30 percent of Kharkiv residents have left the city, where 1,929 homes were destroyed as of April 21. In the temporarily occupied part of the Kharkiv region, Russia is [installing](#) its mobile communications, introducing the ruble into circulation and urging residents to leave for Russia. According to local authorities, occupation forces are also working on [lists of disloyal citizens](#).

On April 23, missiles [struck](#) Odesa, killing 8 people and injuring 18. Some of the Russian missiles hit a residential building. Among those killed were a [three-month-old baby girl](#), her mother, and her grandmother.

At least 5 people were killed and 18 more wounded as a result of a missile strike in the [Vinnitsa region](#) on April 25. On April 25, Mykolaiv was [shelled](#) from Smerch multiple-launch rocket systems and residential neighborhoods were damaged. Mykolaiv is [preparing](#) for a new possible attack by Russian troops, and the authorities do not rule out a siege of the city.

[According to Oleksandr Vilkul](#), head of the Kryvyi Rih military administration, Russian troops are forming a strike force in the Kherson region in the Kryvyi Rih direction, and a possible offensive is expected in the coming days.

At the same time, the Ukrainian Defence Ministry called a possible attack on Dnipro and attempts to capture Kyiv "[unlikely](#)". The Ukrainian Armed Forces General Staff [notes](#) that Russian armed forces continue shelling railway infrastructure in order to disrupt ways of supplying Ukraine with military and technical assistance from partner states. The situation in the regions as of the morning of April 27 is [here](#).

Russia [rejected](#) the proposal to establish a four-day Easter truce to open humanitarian corridors, which was called for by the UN as well as the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry.

## RUSSIA SEEKS TO HIDE THE SCALE OF BURIALS OF KILLED CIVILIANS IN MARIUPOL, SIEGE OF THE CITY CONTINUES

Mariupol, besieged by Russian troops for almost two months, has been destroyed in fact. On April 21, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu publicly reported to Russian President Vladimir Putin that Russian troops needed three to four days to complete the capture of the Azovstal factory, where civilians and Ukrainian military personnel are surrounded, adding that Russia allegedly now controls all of Mariupol. However, Putin [ordered](#) a halt to the storming of the factory, calling it "inexpedient" and ordering it to be besieged. The BBC [reports](#) on possible reasons for such a decision. In spite of this, shelling and bombing of the factory and the city [continues](#). On April 20, four evacuation buses managed to [leave](#) Mariupol for Zaporizhia thanks to a humanitarian corridor. On April 21, the evacuation did not take place due to a lack of safe corridors, and on April 23, it was [disrupted](#) by the Russian armed forces, who stated that it was cancelled due to the threat of shelling. Instead, residents were evacuated to Dokuchayevsk, which is located in temporarily occupied territory. The city's residents were also taken to [remote regions of Russia](#).

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, after a visit to Moscow on April 26 and a meeting with Putin, [said](#) that he had agreed to allow the evacuation of civilians from the Azovstal factory with the participation of the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross. However, it is not known where this evacuation will take place, as previously the Kremlin had only evacuated the city's residents to Russian-controlled territory.

Mariupol city authorities [reported](#) that the Russian military buries city residents who died as a result of hostilities and the siege in settlements around the city, trying to [hide](#) the scale of the burials. The number of people buried in the village of Mangush, 20 km from the city, could be as many as 3,000 to 9,000. Journalists of the investigative project Schemes [noticed](#) on satellite images of the settlement a trench more than 300 meters long, also mass graves were found near the settlements [Stary Krym](#) and [Vinogradne](#), 5 km from the city.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [noted](#) that there were two ways to de-blockade Mariupol: military and diplomatic, and each of them required support from Ukraine's partners. He added that Ukraine offered Russia several formats of exchange through intermediaries, such as wounded for wounded, but there was no agreement.

## THE EXHUMATION OF BODIES OF CIVILIANS IS COMING TO AN END IN BUCHA; TWO PRISONER-OF-WAR EXCHANGES TOOK PLACE BETWEEN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

On April 19 another, fifth [exchange of prisoners-of-war](#) took place between Ukraine and Russia: 60 Ukrainian servicemen, including 10 officers, as well as 16 civilians returned home. Another exchange [took place](#) on April 21: 19 people, including 10 servicemen, returned to Ukraine. This time, among those released were wounded. Igor Romanenko, a military expert and former deputy chief of the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, [commented](#) on the situation, saying that the possibility of exchanges is directly influenced by the situation on the front. Ukrainian intelligence [reports](#) that the Russian army received an order to kill all the Ukrainian Armed Forces prisoners of war in some areas, in particular, in Popasna in the Luhansk Region.

As of April 26, 271 civilians were killed by Russian servicemen in the Donetsk region and 851 were wounded, [according to the head of the Donetsk regional military administration, Pavel Kirilenko](#). These figures do not take into account figures from Mariupol and Volnovakha - it is impossible to establish the exact number of casualties there.

The collection and exhumation of bodies of those killed during the Russian occupation is nearing completion in the liberated city of Bucha, Kyiv region. As of April 23, 412 victims had been found. The mayor of Bucha, Anatoliy Fedoruk, [said](#) that the number of dead could still be clarified by investigators and experts. The counting of the wounded continues. Medics and pathologists [note](#) that dozens of residents were killed by so-called flechettes - metal darts from Russian artillery shells, widely used during World War I. Residents of the Brovary district of Kyiv region [told](#) Hromadske how they survived the occupation and are now rebuilding their homes.